

FIEDLER FAMILY

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By

GEORGE FIEDLER



1946

WINNETKA, ILLINOIS
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1507297

FIEDLER FAMILY

Records and notes concerning various members of the Fiedler Family, covering a period of about three hundred years from the close of the Thirty Years War in 1648 until 1946, together with historical notes concerning the same period of history.

By

GEORGE FIEDLER

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Revised

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TO MY WIFE

AGNES AMBERG FIEDLER

AND OUR CHILDREN

MARY and JOHN

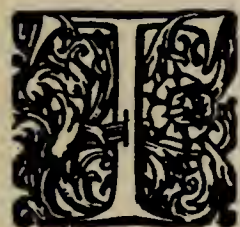
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INTRODUCTION



THE BACKGROUND and history of my family has been of interest to me ever since the days of my childhood. I recall that at first my information on the subject consisted merely of the general knowledge that the family was of German descent, and that my grandparents had emigrated from "the old country" to America and had settled on a farm in southwestern Wisconsin.

The family had no written records other than the most simple lists of births, marriages, and deaths on the fly leaves of a few prayer books. No one remembered when the family had immigrated to America, nor exactly from where. The origin and background of the family in Germany, and the emigration to America had been almost completely forgotten and lost in the dim obscurity, when I took up the search. As a matter of fact the family was rapidly forgetting its early days at the frontier in southwestern Wisconsin.

I hardly knew where to begin my search. My father died when I was seven. My inquiries among my uncles resulted in very little information. Finally I learned that my grandfather, Bernard Fiedler, had come to

this country from a little village called Silberhausen in Germany, and that the family had a distant cousin, Otto Hellbach, living in Germany.

I decided to write to the pastor of the Catholic church at Silberhausen, also to Otto Hellbach. I got prompt answers. Thus I began to assemble the matter which I have gathered into this book.

The material which I collected grew from year to year. Then in August, 1939, I was able to make a trip to Europe, which included Germany, and, of course, Silberhausen. At last I found the information which I had sought for so many years. I had begun my inquiries assuming that I would never be able to go back any earlier than the date my Grandfather Fiedler was born. Actually I was able to trace the family back for three hundred years.

After I returned from my trip, I saw clearly that I would have to put all of my information and material into book form if I wished to preserve it for my children and their children. Soon, no one in the various branches of the family would even know where to start looking for information concerning their ancestors.

In assembling my material, I decided that the history of the Fiedler family would best be divided into three periods: from early times to 1648; then from 1648 to 1857; and finally from 1857 to date.

The first period, from early times to 1648, is simply a historical outline of the tribe, nation, and country to which our family belonged. On my trip abroad I learned, from my discussions with Otto Hellbach, that our forebears came from the tribe of Alemanni, and had, prior to 1648, lived for generations or centuries in Silberhausen in the so called Eichsfeld. This led me to study the history of the Alemanni and Germany, and for the sake of my children, I have included some historical notes to show the background from which the family sprang.

The second period is from 1648 to 1857. The year 1648 is one of the great landmarks in history. The Thirty Years War in Germany and in Europe ended in 1648 with the Treaty of Westphalia. The year 1648 is also the most basic and significant date in gathering a history of our family, for I was able to find exact family records back to that year. We have no exact dates prior to 1648, because during the thirty years of devastating religious war, practically all of Germany and central Europe was ravaged, burned, and destroyed. This second period, from 1648 to 1857, covers about two hundred years, when the Fiedler family was living in Silberhausen, and when the exact date of every birth, marriage, and death in the family was recorded in the parish register of the Catholic

church in that village. This period ends in 1857, when Bernard Fiedler emigrated to America.

The third and final period, from 1857 to 1946, is the shortest period, merely 89 years, and covers the story of the family in America, especially in southwestern Wisconsin.

If we combine the second and third periods, from 1648 to 1946, we have almost 300 years of exact family records. There were nine succeeding generations during these three centuries. Thus there was about one generation every 33 years. Since each person has two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents and so on, the ancestors of my two children for nine generations back spread out rapidly — 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512. In other words, my children have 512 direct ancestors nine generations back. This book mentions only a few of them. Information about most of the others has already been lost in time.

I have written at length concerning Bernard Fiedler and his wife, two of the eight great-grandparents of my children. What of the other six? It would have been too great a task for me to attempt a complete record back to any given generation.

I shall distribute copies of this book among the various branches of the family. It will be noticed that I wrote mostly about names and dates which for the

most part occurred many years ago. This was done intentionally to avoid writing a personal or an intimate family record. Each member of the family may add whatever personal records he may wish to preserve, also the names and dates of births, marriages and deaths of any particular branch or connection of the family.

I have enjoyed the long task of compiling the information for this book. I found time to start the work in January, 1944, while recovering from an attack of influenza. During subsequent months I continued to write whenever I had a few hours to spare.

I hope particularly that my dear children, Mary and John, will enjoy reading these pages from time to time as they grow older. I would be pleased if they would keep the family records up to date and add material for the sake of their own children.

GEORGE FIEDLER

Winnetka, Illinois

Christmas, 1946

I

**Historical Background from the Earliest Times
to 1648**

THE FIEDLERS came from a part of Germany which was settled in prehistoric times by the Alemanni, one of the four great Germanic tribes. I shall set forth a few facts in the early history of the Alemanni and of Germany which may be of interest to those not already familiar with them.

The earliest history of Germany is recorded by Julius Caesar, who visited Germany shortly before the birth of Christ, and by Tacitus, who made a visit about one hundred years after the birth of Christ.

When Tacitus visited Germany about 100 A.D., the Roman Empire had passed its golden age and was about to start its long decline. One historian wrote that as the Roman Empire declined "nature herself seemed to have created the vacuum into which she in time inevitably attracted the Germans."

The Alemanni crossed the Alps from Germany into Italy and reached Ravenna about 250 A.D. From the time of Christ for five centuries the Roman Empire continued to decline, and as it declined, the Germans, particularly the Alemanni, arrived in increasing numbers. Said one historian: "The fall of Rome was in reality a slow 'weathering' process so gradual that, as

the saying is, 'Rome fell but the Roman didn't know it.' They thought it was an economic depression." By 500 A.D., the Roman Empire was definitely at an end in the west.

As the Alemanni and other Germans for five centuries migrated from the north into Italy, they came in contact with Christianity, which was spreading rapidly at Rome during those early centuries. Many Germans were converted by the fifth century.

Clovis (481-511) king of the Franks (one of the Germanic peoples), was converted during a battle. Clovis' wife was Clothilda, a Christian princess. While the battle was temporarily going against him, Clovis called upon Christ to show His strength. "Clothilda says that Thou art the Son of the living God, and that Thou dost give victory to those that put their trust in Thee. I have called upon my gods but they give me no aid. Only save me from the hands of my enemies and I will believe in Thee." Clovis won the battle and was baptized.

In order to give a better outline of the early history of the Germans, I want to quote a few paragraphs from "World History" by Hayes, Moon, and Wayland. This book, after describing the rise and the beginning of the fall of the Roman Empire in general terms, then proceeds with the invasions of the Germans from the north:

"As we have seen, the northern boundary of the Roman Empire during the first four centuries of the Christian era followed two great rivers, the Rhine and the Danube....

"The (early) Germans, unlike the Romans, had no political unity. On the contrary, they were broken up into various tribes....

"In their dealings with one another they were rigidly bound by customs and usages....

"Many Germans came peaceably across the borders into the (Roman) Empire as traders or as permanent settlers....

"Toward the close of the fourth century a notable change occurred in the nature of German inroads. From that time on, especially in the fifth century, whole tribes came. They came, they conquered, and they remained. These were the great German invasions....

"Before the German invasions, Christianity was the dominant religion in the Roman Empire....

"The conversion of the Germans was achieved mainly by Christian missionaries who were monks....

"The invasion and conquest of the western provinces of the Roman Empire by the barbarian (including the Germans), starting toward the end of the fourth century, marked the beginning of a (so-called) Dark Age in the history of Christian civilization. It lasted until the eleventh century.

"Two outstanding figures in the Dark Ages were two kings: Charles the Frank....

"He is known as Charles the Great, or Charlemagne.

"Charles was at Rome, kneeling in worship in St. Peter's Church, when Leo crowned him emperor, in the year 800.

"In 962 after there had again been no emperor in the West for a time, Pope John XII crowned Otto, the great German king, as Holy Roman Emperor. The ideal was that the Empire, like the Catholic Church, should embrace all Christian kingdoms. The Empire thus aimed to be, in the political realm, what the Church was in the spiritual realm. It insisted that it was the true successor to the ancient Christian Roman Empire. Hence it claimed the name, Holy Roman Empire....

"The Holy Roman Empire of Otto I and his successors was built upon the kingdom of Germany....

"The head of the Empire was elected by the princes and was styled German King or King of the Romans until he was crowned by the Pope. Thereafter he was Roman Emperor....

"In theory, the emperor had great powers — he was the successor of Constantine and Theodosius, but in fact he was little more than a feudal lord....

"Certain princes, as we have seen, elected the German King; thus indirectly they elected the emperor.... The seven Electors, as fixed by the Golden Bull, were the archbishops of Mainz, Trier, and Cologne, the king of Bohemia, the count palatine of the Rhine, the duke of Saxony, and the margrave of Brandenburg.

"In the Middle Age the Catholic Church, as we have seen, was powerful and influential. It not only taught religion and morals, it also did a good deal of governing. In the next centuries, from the fourteenth to the seventeenth, its influence and authority, though still great, perceptibly lessened and weakened.

"In the sixteenth century, just when western Europe was expanding overseas in America and Asia and Africa, a notable break occurred in the Christian Church in Europe. A large number of Christians, mainly in northern Europe, revolted against the authority of the Pope, gave up some of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, and organized under different creeds and new names. The new groups came to be known as Protestants, and the break in the Church that gave rise to them is often called the Reformation. A better name, more descriptive and more accurate, is the Protestant Revolt.

"This break in the Church occurred in the sixteenth century....

"The first reformer to lead a large number of people in western Europe to break openly with the Catholic Church was Martin Luther (1483-1546). A native German, Luther became a monk at twenty-two....

"Luther flooded Germany with pamphlets in which he violently attacked the Pope and the Catholic Church....

"At one time it seemed as though all the Germans would rebel against the Catholic Church, but when bands of peasants in southern Germany began to rebel against their rulers in state as well as in church, the princes became alarmed....

"The net result was that Germany was divided. Some of the little states took one side, some the other. Those in the north followed Luther and became Protestant; those in the south rejected his program and remained Catholics....

"The Holy Roman Emperor and a majority of the Electors remained Catholics, but many princes became Lutheran and some became Calvinist....

"In 1618 war broke out again in Germany between Catholics and Protestants. It lasted thirty years, and so is called

the Thirty Years War. It was political and economic, as well as religious. It spread like a great fire, growing into an international war; and was one of the most ruthless and destructive in history....

"The various treaties of 1648 that ended the war are known as the "Peace of Westphalia."...

The foregoing is a very rough outline of the history, from early times until 1648, of the people to which our family belonged.

Our people were Alemans. The Alemanni were converted to Christianity, to Catholicism, by the end of the fifth century.

When Charlemagne in 800 A.D., and Otto the Great in 962 A.D., revived the Roman Empire of "The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," our people lived under that empire. The Archbishop of Mainz was one of the seven Electors of the Empire. He was both the spiritual and the temporal ruler of the district or principality in which our family lived for centuries. This part of Germany is known as the Eichsfeld, and includes Silberhausen, the native village of the Fiedler family.

The protestant revolt in Germany under Luther began in 1523, and the Thirty Years War (a religious war) began in 1618, ending in 1648. The village of Silberhausen was destroyed during that war. The Fiedler family emerged from the war as Catholics, living in Silberhausen, in the Eichsfeld, as subjects of the Archbishop of Mainz.

II

The Fiedler Family in Silberhausen
from 1648 to 1857

HE WRITTEN RECORD concerning our family, beginning in 1648, or about 1650, were still in existence in the church books in the Catholic church of SS. Cosmas and Damian in the village of Silberhausen when I visited there in 1939. The only reason the records go back so far is the fact that the family lived continuously in the village of Silberhausen, and the entries of all births, marriages, and deaths happen to be preserved in one parish church. Thus, from one source, I was able to get information about the period from 1648 to 1857, a span of 209 years.

What do we know about the family in Silberhausen during those 209 years? All we know with exactness are the dates of the births, marriages, and deaths, which were preserved in the church records. We can, however, piece out a reasonably accurate story of our ancestors as they lived in Silberhausen.

It seems certain that about two-thirds of the family perished during the Thirty Years War. The few survivors in 1648 found their village in ruins, the entire country desolated. They had been Catholic and subjects of the Archbishop of Mainz for centuries. Despite the thirty years of religious war, they in Silberhausen

SILBERHAUSEN



and in the Eichsfeld remained Catholic, and formed a small island of Catholicism in a large area of Germany which had become Protestant and Lutheran.

Our ancestors in Silberhausen were simple villagers who tilled the land just outside their village or worked at the simple trades. The church records show that one was a blacksmith, another was a shoemaker.

The wounds of the Thirty Years War must have taken a long time to heal, perhaps a hundred years. By then Silberhausen was rebuilt as a small, rural, medieval German village. It has changed very little. When in 1939 I saw Silberhausen, it was a village of about 1000 people, and it was almost the same as my grandparents had left it eighty-two years before in 1857, except that it then had a population of about 500. The present village was about three hundred years old. About half of the houses were built of rough uncut stone, with mud and straw plaster. The other half were of wood, with slate shingles on the sides as well as on the roofs. Hence these houses look like silver houses, and I assume that is the reason for the name "Silberhausen."

I do not think there was any modern plumbing, heating, or gas in the entire village. The community did have electricity. The streets were partly paved with stones. There were a few humble stores, a post office, and the church. The latter was the only structure in the village which appeared to have been planned by an architect. SS. Cosmas and Damian was built in Renaissance style in 1758. The stained glass windows in the church were all modern. The pews

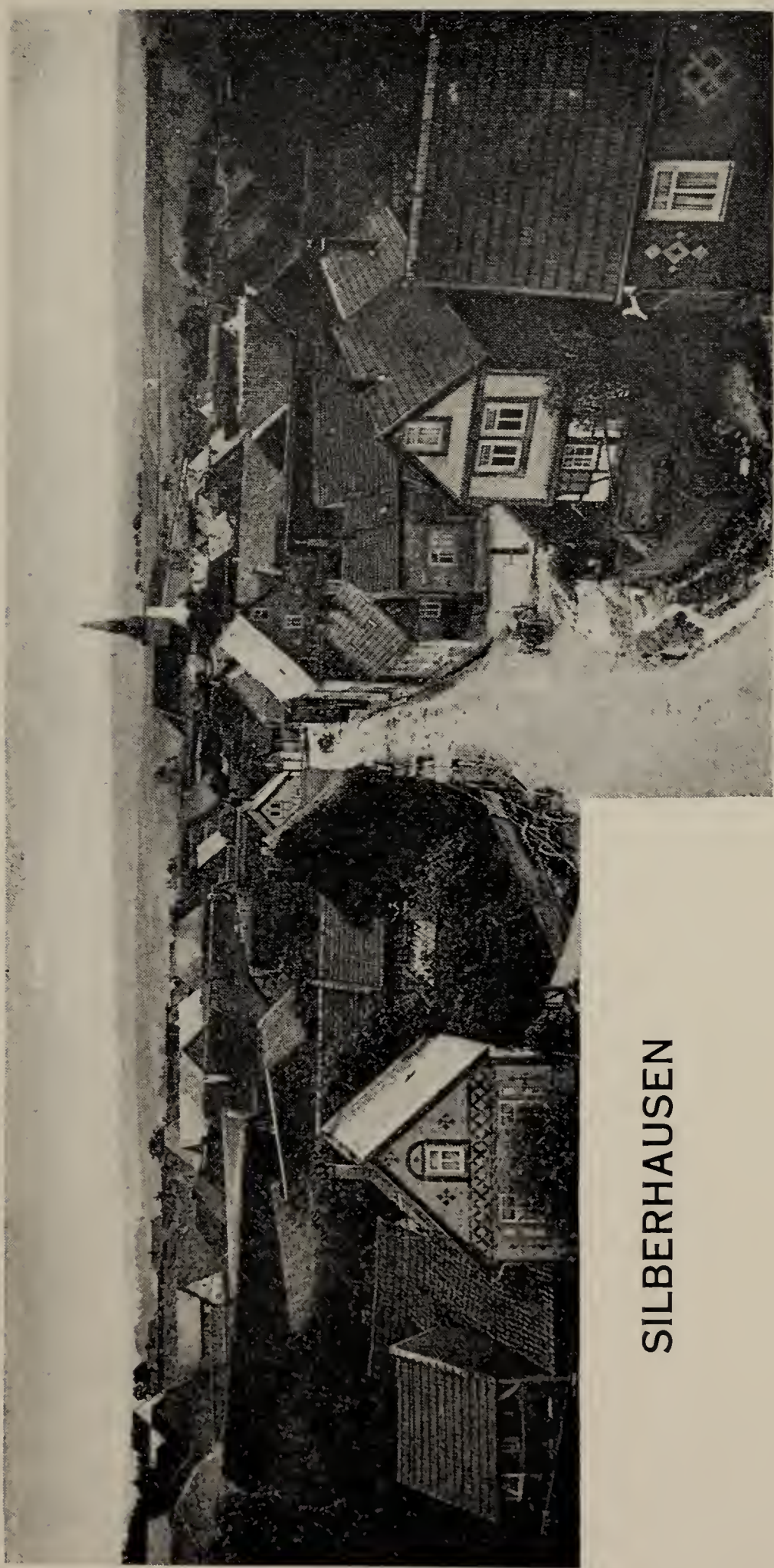
were built in place, unlike many other churches in Europe. The organ loft and the pews were of heavy, rough, hand-hewn timbers. Without doubt our people contributed labor and money toward the building of the church in 1758. Our people went to that church from 1758 until 1857, about one hundred years.

The general appearance of Silberhausen was poor, humble, and Catholic. The crucifix stood outdoors in little shrines along the main street, the side streets, and in many yards.

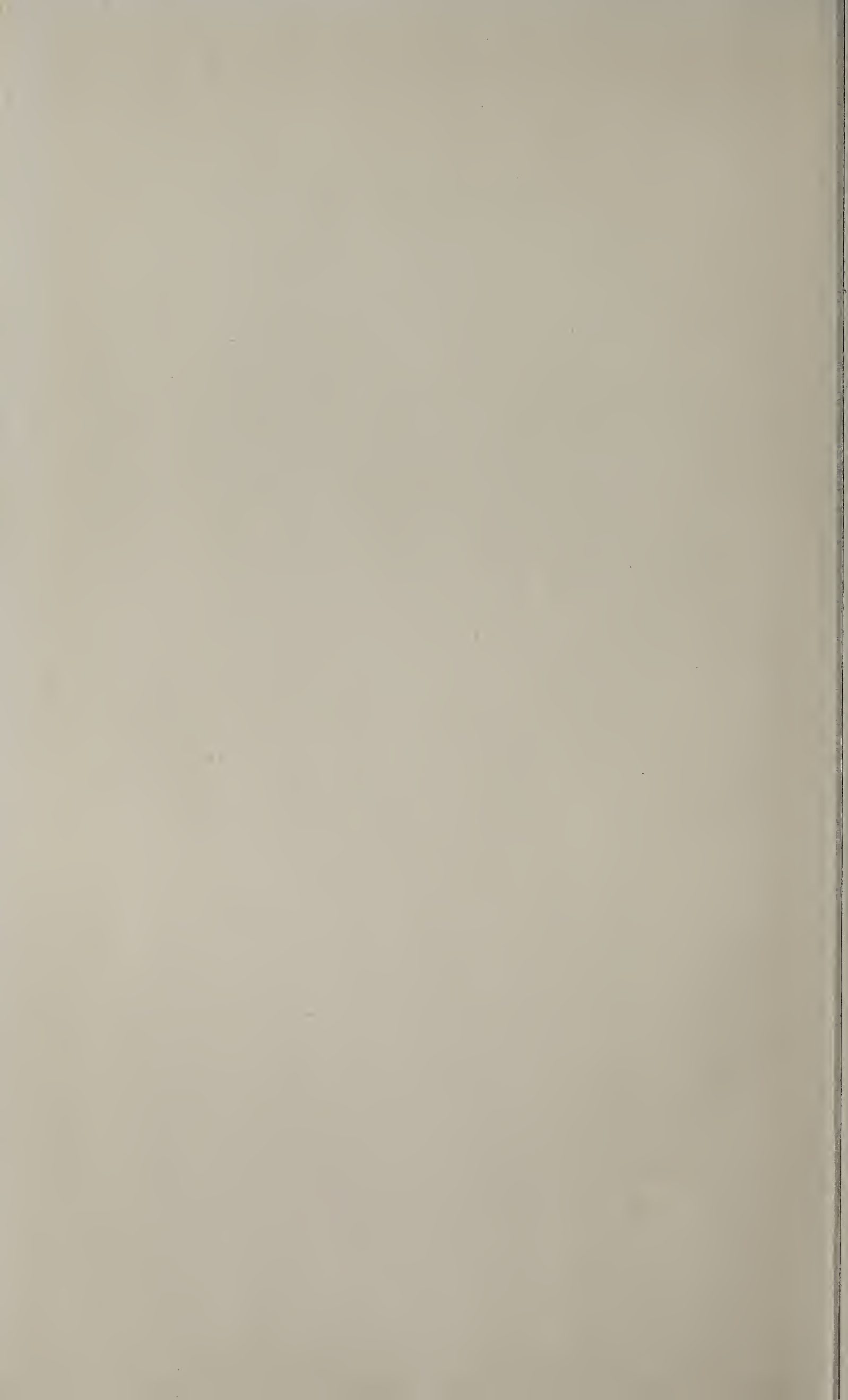
About half of the people in Silberhausen were engaged in farming the nearby land. The other half were carpenters, shoemakers, and small trades people. There was no high school. There were no professional people, other than the priest.

It is impossible to describe Silberhausen without identifying it as one of the villages in the little rural region in central Germany called the Eichsfeld. On my trip in August, 1939, I learned, while talking to several people on board the liner "Europa," that the village of Silberhausen was practically unknown except to those who lived in that vicinity. On the other hand, when I would identify Silberhausen as one of the villages in the Eichsfeld, I would find that they had heard of that little region, and would think of it as one of the poorest and most backward parts of Germany.

The soil in the Eichsfeld is only of medium quality. Many parts of Germany and many cities in Germany were very wealthy. The Eichsfeld and its people and villages have always been poor.



SILBERHAUSEN



The winters in the Eichsfeld are not cold and the summers are not hot. The climate is mild, even, and European, unlike the extremes of heat and cold in Wisconsin or in Illinois.

The people in the Eichsfeld, Catholic from very early times, kept their faith despite the Protestant revolt. Thus these Eichsfelders, our people, were Catholic from early times, and are still Catholic — a continuous loyalty to the Church for almost the entire Christian era.

For many generations the Catholic families in the Eichsfeld were very large. In most families there were eight, nine, or ten children. The people were and are a rural folk, peasants for the most part. They do not live on separate farms, but in villages of five hundred to one thousand, three or four miles apart. They go out from the villages to till their lands.

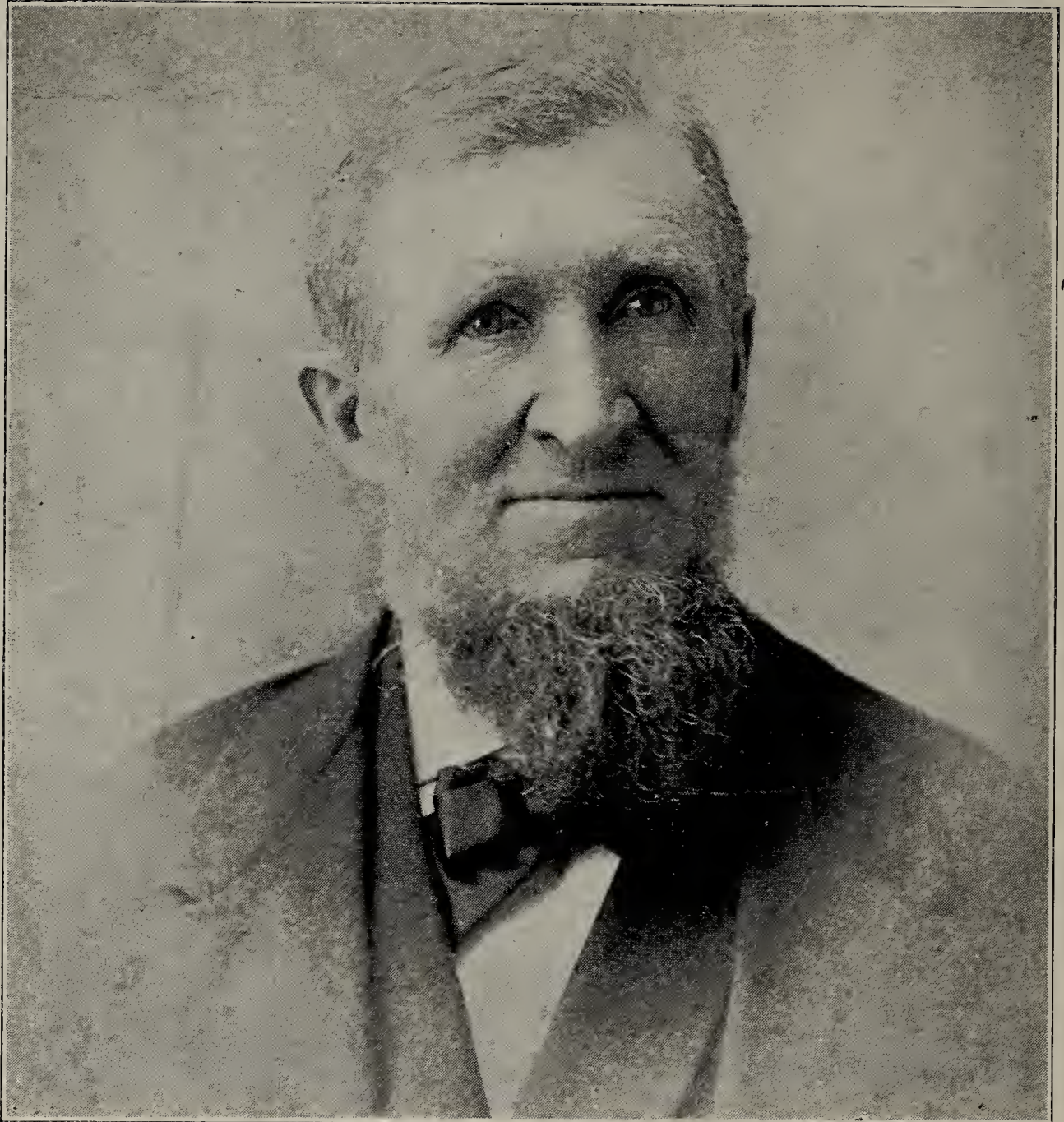
I was told that for centuries the people who lived in the villages in the Eichsfeld encouraged their surplus population to migrate to the cities and to the more prosperous provinces, so that in every part of Germany there have always been Eichsfelders in business, in the clergy, in medicine, and in the legal profession.

The people in the little towns in the Eichsfeld were so poor that they had to work hard and be thrifty. With these habits, they were frequently successful when they moved to other parts of Germany. Since they were accustomed to migrating to other parts of Germany, it was quite natural for them to go to America, when the great German emigrations began.

The Eichsfeld was a possession of the Archbishop of Mainz from early times. The Archbishop lost this region during the Napoleonic wars. In 1807 Napoleon took it from the Archbishop of Mainz and gave it to Jerome Bonaparte, who was made King of Westphalia. After the final defeat of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna in 1815 gave the Eichsfeld to the King of Prussia. It has belonged to Prussia ever since. The Eichsfelders, at least those who came to this country, considered themselves to be Prussians.

Today, 1946, Silberhausen and the Eichsfeld belong to the district Mülhausen, in the province of Saxony, in the state of Prussia, in Germany.

To sum up the story from 1648 to 1857, the Fiedler family continued to live in Silberhausen in the Eichsfeld as subjects of the Archbishop of Mainz in the Holy Roman Empire until that empire was broken up during the Napoleonic wars. At about that time, Silberhausen and the entire Eichsfeld were taken away from the Archbishop of Mainz and given to the King of Prussia. The family then lived under the Hohenzollerns until Bernard Fiedler emigrated to America in 1857.



BERNARD FIEDLER

1828-1887

III

**The Emigration of Bernard Fiedler
to America in 1857**

BERNARD FIEDLER and his little family immigrated to America in 1857, during the great German migrations to the new world. A general picture of the migrations of millions of Germans to America is summarized in "International Migration," published by National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., 1929, Volume I, page 117:

"The depression (in Germany) became more intense after 1844.... The years 1846 and 1847 were particularly serious, partly because of the potato disease. The whole agriculture of southwestern Germany centered around the potato crop....

"Figures are available for German immigration from 1844 to 1854 for national and foreign ports. The number rose from 45,655 in 1844 to a maximum of 108,457 in 1847. After decreasing to 78,549 in 1850, it again rapidly increased and reached its culmination in 1854 with 240,427 departures of German citizens.

Volume II, page 341, "*Motives for Emigration*": "The most important factors, however, have been economic and social.... If people are satisfied with their lot they have no motive to migrate.... But if

single persons or whole classes find their economic existence seriously threatened by a failure of crops or other misfortunes, they will often resort to emigration as a road by which to escape life's tribulations or to improve their lot. . . .

"About the middle of the nineteenth century an important influence was the passion for land on the part of the younger sons of German peasants who could not hope to satisfy that craving at home. This constant factor was reinforced by severe economic, social or political disturbances in Germany. . . .

"In the first half of the 1850's political considerations also stimulated emigration. The political movement of 1848 and the hope that it might lead to a national union of the German people had come to naught."

This gives us the background and the reasons which impelled Bernard Fiedler to immigrate to the United States. Revolution had broken out all over Germany in 1848. There was much unemployment and hardship. Conditions in the Eichsfeld, normally poor, were desperate. The Eichsfelders were accustomed to emigrate to other parts of Germany, but with desperate conditions everywhere in their own country, many emigrated to America. Several Fiedler families came to the new world. These families are all distantly related.

Bernard Fiedler, my grandfather, was born in 1828 at Silberhausen. He was a shoemaker. When he was twenty-five, he was married at SS. Cosmas and Damian to Anna Katharine Schneider, who was then

twenty-two. After they were married four years and had two children, Henry and Genevieve, they emigrated to America. Thus Bernard Fiedler was twenty-nine and his wife twenty-six when they took their two little children and struck out for America.

I suppose that Bernard Fiedler must have saved every "pfennig" to emigrate. I know that he and his wife actually walked from Silberhausen in central Germany all the way to Bremen to sail. And they had the two little children to carry along. Their courage must have been great, or their living conditions in the poor Eichsfeld unbearable to have done what they did. They had to take all of their food with them for their six weeks on the ocean. I say "six weeks on the ocean" because that is one very definite fact which my Grandmother Fiedler related to me on several occasions. A few steam vessels were in operation on the Atlantic Ocean in 1857, but at that time the great majority of ships were sailing vessels. My Grandmother Fiedler told my mother, and the latter told me, that the ocean trip was almost beyond endurance, and that the two little children were beyond themselves. Then, when the family arrived at New York, they were in a strange land where they heard only a strange tongue. I am not certain how they reached Chicago. I think partly by rail and partly by boat through the Great Lakes. Arriving at Chicago, their money was gone, and Bernard had to unload lumber for a while to get a few dollars to complete the journey to southwestern Wisconsin, where a number of Eichsfeld families intended to settle.

I have tried to ascertain why Bernard Fiedler decided to go to Wisconsin. Bernard's wife, my Grandmother Fiedler, told me when I was a child that they were looking for land "with wood and water." This statement of my Grandmother Fiedler does not, however, answer the question completely. There were many frontier states in America in the 1850's which had "land with wood and water." In all probability Bernard Fiedler and his little family were simply caught up in the great wave of German immigration which went to the state of Wisconsin. In the book entitled "Wisconsin," published in 1941 by the Work Projects Administration, it is said:

"Half the people of Wisconsin (50.2 per cent of the total 2,939,006 according to the census of 1930) were either born in foreign countries or born in this country of foreign or mixed parentage. Of these, 41.2 per cent claimed Germany as their country of origin....

We now come to the story of the early days of Bernard Fiedler at the frontier in southwestern Wisconsin.

IV

**Early Days of Bernard Fiedler at the Frontier
in Southwestern Wisconsin**

WISCONSIN was admitted to the Union in 1848. Only nine years later, in 1857, my grandfather, Bernard Fiedler, age 30, arrived in the southwestern corner of the state with his wife and two children, Henry and Genevieve.

Bernard did not work long in Chicago. After he had saved a few dollars, he continued on his journey, crossed the northern part of Illinois, and entered southwestern Wisconsin. This part of Wisconsin was then booming with the development of the lead and zinc mines which centered around Galena, Illinois, and just across the state line in southwestern Wisconsin.

Bernard entered Wisconsin near the village of Hazel Green. There his meager funds were again exhausted, and he had to settle down for a short time in Hazel Green, where he worked at his trade as a shoemaker. He made heavy leather boots and shoes for the miners in the vicinity. He bought his leather from U. S. Grant, who was then in the leather business in near-by Galena. This was the same U. S. Grant who, three or four years later, became a General in the Civil War, and who afterwards became President of the United States. Bernard was still in Hazel Green,

working at his trade, when the Civil War broke out in 1860, only three years after he had arrived in this country.

From Hazel Green, Bernard finally went a few miles north to the township of Elk Grove to settle down as a farmer, the occupation for which he had come to this country. He first bought eighty acres of virgin Wisconsin land. He cut down the trees, grubbed out the stumps, and broke the soil with a team of oxen. The land had never before been cultivated, nor had it previously been settled by any white man. Afterwards Bernard acquired more and more land until he had a total of three hundred and seventy acres of the finest Wisconsin dairy land. In doing this, Bernard had to borrow money and mortgage his lands. At one time he borrowed money from a man who lived across the state line in Lena, Illinois.

Bernard and his wife saved their money bit by bit in gold, kept the coins in a cup, and carried the money to the holder of the mortgage at Lena. Finally the debt was paid and the land cleared of the mortgage. Bernard was out of debt and the owner of a well stocked farm.

Bernard and his wife resided on their farm in Elk Grove Township for about twenty-five years. They did their marketing in the nearby villages of Hazel Green, Cuba City, Belmont, and Shullsburg. The farm was about twenty miles southwest of Mineral Point, which was then one of the largest communities in the mining region. The Fiedler farm had the two basic elements which Bernard had sought, wood and

water. The house on the farm was built a few hundred feet down the hill from the white frame church of St. Peter, which still stands. Bernard Fiedler and his good friend, Anton Gerlach (my maternal grandfather) helped build the church. It was a mission, there being no resident pastor at the parish. A priest came to say Mass on alternate Sundays from the nearby parish at Seymour Corners.

The physical comforts of the family were only those which the early settlers had at the Wisconsin frontier. At first their only illumination was from burning a small piece of cloth in a dish which contained melted lard. A few years later the family made their own candles of tallow. Much later they acquired kerosene lamps, and considered these a very great improvement in their standard of living.

Of course, Bernard Fiedler and his family had a well stocked larder, even from the beginning. They had bountiful quantities of meat, vegetables, and fruit, especially berries, cherries and apples. Also, they had plenty of milk, cream, and butter.

The farmers around the countryside had few pleasures. The greatest celebration were held on the "names days" of the older members of the family. These occasions called for the killing of a calf and the preparation of a generous feast. The neighbors from miles around would gather for such a country celebration.

Both Bernard Fiedler and Anton Gerlach are mentioned in a small way in the printed history of Lafayette County, Wisconsin. A copy of this book may

be found in the public library in Darlington, the county seat of Lafayette County, Wisconsin.

Inasmuch as Bernard died in 1887, and I was not born until 1904, I am unable to give a first hand description of him or his personality. I have inserted the one picture which I have been able to find.

Bernard Fiedler died in 1887 at the age of 59, just thirty years after he had arrived in this country. By that time he had acquired considerable property and a little money. He had gone to the county seat at Darlington, where he had his Will drawn by a lawyer in 1882. He knew for some time that he could not live much longer, for in clearing his land he had weakened his heart and broken his health. He developed a serious heart condition. I recall hearing one story in the family that on several occasions one of the sons would have to take a team and carriage and drive to nearby Shullsburg to get Dr. Gratiot, a pioneer doctor in the lead region in southwestern Wisconsin. At the end Bernard died suddenly of a heart attack at his farm home, a few hundred feet down the hill from the church. He was buried in the little cemetery which formed part of the churchyard. Some twenty years later his remains and his tombstone were moved to Mineral Point, several of his children having settled in that community.

After I became a lawyer, I looked up the record of his estate as it was probated at Darlington in Lafayette County. The estate totalled some \$11,000. The Will devised the property in the manner which was customary in those days and which is still followed by a

great many people. It gave the entire estate to the widow for life, and upon her death gave the remainder in equal shares to the seven children. The practice of treating the children equally has, it seems, always been a fundamental principle in the family, and this rule was carried out in the Will of Bernard Fiedler by a provision in which he said that the sum of \$300 which he had advanced to one of his sons was to be charged against that child and deducted, so that he would not have any advantage over the other children. The only other interesting clause in the Will was a strong provision that the share for the daughter was to be her own separate property, and was to be kept free from any interference on the part of her husband. As a practical matter, I suppose that this clause was not effective, because of the intimate way in which the property affairs of a married couple are ordinarily mixed together. Doubtless if Bernard were drawing his Will today, he would try to put the share in trust so as to have the intervention of a trustee to keep the money separate and distinct. The Will misspelled the family name and rendered it as "Fiddler." This was nothing more than a mistake on the part of the lawyer. There has never been any doubt concerning the spelling or the pronunciation of the family name.

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I think it will be of interest to the family to set forth the Will in full:

In the Name of God, Amen: I Bernard Fiddler of the Town of Elk Grove, in the County of LaFayette and State of Wisconsin, being of sound mind and memory and being mindful of the uncertainties of human life, do make, publish and declare

..... This my last Will and Testament in manner following, that is to say:

First — It is my will, and I direct that after my death my just debts and funeral expenses be first paid and discharged out of the personal property of which I shall die seized, and in case I shall die leaving no personal property then that my said debts and funeral expenses be first paid out of my estate at large.

Second — I give and bequeath unto my beloved wife Catharine Fiddler to have and to hold during the term of her natural life or until she shall be again married after my death all the rest, residue and remainder of my real and personal estate of which I shall die seized that shall remain after the payment of my just debts and funeral expenses. And in case my said wife shall again marry then and in that case upon her marriage she shall take and receive of my said estate her dower interest therein under the Laws of the State of Wisconsin and no more and her said dower interest by her so taken she shall hold absolutely unto herself forever, and the rest, residue and remainder of my said estate shall then descend and be distributed in the manner and to the persons hereinafter described and mentioned.

Third — After the death of my said wife Catharine or in case she shall again marry I give devise and bequeath all the rest, residue and remainder of my said estate, real and personal that shall then remain unto my beloved children, Henry Fiddler, Genevieve Fiddler, John Fiddler, Bernard Fiddler, Herman Fiddler, Earnest Fiddler, and Joseph Fiddler to take and to hold unto themselves, their heirs and assigns forever, share and share alike. Except that from the share of my said son Henry which he shall take there shall be deducted the sum of Three Hundred Dollars (\$300.00) which sum I have heretofore advanced unto him and said sum of Three Hundred Dollars (\$300.00) so taken from the share of my said son Henry shall be distributed among the remainder of my said children share and share alike. And my devise and bequest to my said daughter Genevieve is made subject to the following condition, towit: It is my desire that the share by her so taken shall be her own separate estate. And in case she shall marry and shall attempt either directly or indirectly to transfer or convey in any manner to her husband or for his use any part of the property, money or effects she

shall take under this will then the devise and bequest by me made to her herein shall be void and her share of my said property hereinbefore named shall be then immediately distributed among my other surviving children share and share alike. It being my intention to convey herein property and estate only for her sole and individual use and subject only to her control free from her husband.

Fourth — I do hereby nominate and appoint my friend George Snyder to be the executor of this my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills by me made.

In witness whereof I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 22d day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Two.

Bernard Fiedler (Seal)

The above instrument consisting of Three pages was at the date thereof, signed, sealed, published and declared by the said Bernard Fiddler as and for his last will and testament in presence of us, who at his request, and in his presence and in the presence of each other have subscribed our names as witnesses thereto.

David S. Rose, Residing at Darlington in LaFayette County
John Schneider, Residing at Seymour in Lafayette County
E. C. Tolley, Residing at Darlington in LaFayette County

The inventory in the estate showed three hundred and seventy acres of good farm land, all free and clear, appraised at \$8,410. In addition there was some personal property — “one span of bay horses,” miscellaneous personal property, and over two thousand dollars out at interest. The total of the personalty was \$2,517.50. The grand total of the estate therefore was \$10,927.50 Almost \$11,000. That was a considerable sum in 1887, when a laborer had to work a long hard day for one silver dollar. It is plain that Bernard Fiedler, by his hard work and thrifty habits, did very well during his thirty short years in America.

V

Anna Katharine Schneider Fiedler

THIS BOOK has thus far talked about one generation after another of Fiedlers. What of their wives? I shall write of only one wife, the wife of Bernard Fiedler.

My grandmother, Anna Katharine Schneider Fiedler, was born in Silberhausen in 1831, a few years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. She married Bernard Fiedler, as we have seen, at SS. Cosmas and Damian on February 7, 1853. Thus she was twenty-two when she married. She was married in the midst of a great European depression. She left her own people and went with her husband to the frontier of America in 1857, before the days of railroads and steamships. She and her husband went farming, raised a large family, accumulated property, saved their money. She was widowed when she was fifty-six. She soon sold her farm and moved to Mineral Point, where four of her sons were living. Thus she was widowed twenty-two years after the close of the American Civil War. She lived quietly in Mineral Point during the Spanish American War, and through the First World War. She did not die until 1923, when she was ninety-two. She therefore practically spanned the century between Napoleon and the beginnings of the Second World War.



ANNA KATHARINE SCHNEIDER FIEDLER

1831-1923

I knew this remarkable woman very well. When her son Bernard Jr., my own father, died in 1911, I was seven, and she came to live with us for the winter. Thus she was eighty when I first got to know her well. She seldom spoke of the old country or her marriage there, or her trip here. And yet she was then only fifty-four years in this country. She spoke her native German best, but she also spoke English quite well.

I was with my Grandmother Fiedler when she died at Mineral Point, Wisconsin, on July 2, 1923. She was ninety-two. I was seventeen, at home from the University of Wisconsin. On the night of her death, those present were her sons, John and Joseph, and I, the only one of her grandsons. Hers was the first death I had ever seen. It was an inspiring one. Until the last few minutes, she kept repeating "Jesus, Mary, and Joseph" in her native German.

Her ancestors had, for at least two hundred years, probably more, been buried at Silberhausen. She was buried from St. Mary's Catholic Church in Mineral Point, Wisconsin. This woman, born in medieval Germany in 1831, died in modern Wisconsin in 1923.

What kind of an estate did she leave? I understand that shortly after she lost her husband in 1887, she sold the three hundred and seventy acres. I do not know what price she got. Nor do I know how she invested her money. I do know that she managed to give each of her seven children two thousand dollars for a better start in life. Those gifts totalled fourteen thousand dollars of principal. Even then she kept a

tidy sum for herself. For when she died, her estate showed the following:

Note, interest at 5½%, secured by a mortgage	\$2500
Note, interest at 6%	500
Third Liberty Loan Bond, interest at 4½	50
Cash	4487
	\$7537

To summarize the success of this immigrant couple, Bernard Fiedler came to this country in 1857 with nothing at all. When he died in 1887 he left about \$11,000. His widow increased the estate to about \$21,500. Of that, she gave \$14,000 to her children, and kept \$7,500 until her death.

Bernard Fiedler and his wife had a family which for those days was neither large nor small. They had seven children. Six sons and one daughter:

John Henry was born in Silberhausen on November 13, 1853, brought to America at the age of 4, married Catherine Steffen, had nine children, died June 1, 1904, while living in La Mars, Iowa.

Maria Genevieve (Phoebe) was born in Silberhausen on October 23, 1856, brought to America at the age of one year, married Bartel Smith, had six children, died September 12, 1926, while living at Dubuque, Iowa.

John was born on the Fiedler farm in La Fayette County, Wisconsin, on October 7, 1860,

married Augusta Belken, had six children, died December 7, 1931, while living at Cuba City, Wisconsin. His widow is still living.

Bernard, my father, was born on the Fiedler farm on November 20, 1862, married my mother, Dorothy Gerlach, at St. Peter's mission church on January 20, 1891, had five children, two of whom died in infancy. He died at Mineral Point, Wisconsin, on November 12, 1911. His widow, my mother, is still living.

Herman was born on the Fiedler farm on December 14, 1865, married Maggie Hoppenjan, had one daughter and eight sons. He is living at Cuba City, Wisconsin.

Ernest was born on the Fiedler farm on December 12, 1867, married Pearl Cummins, had one son. Ernest died suddenly at Milwaukee on June 5, 1936, was buried at Mineral Point. His widow is still living in Milwaukee.

Joseph John, the youngest, was born on the Fiedler farm on March 30, 1870, married Clara Shillen at Mineral Point on November 20, 1901, has one son and three daughters.

VI

**Relatives in Germany Described in Connection with
the Trip Abroad of George Fiedler
in 1939**

WHEN BERNARD FIEDLER, his wife, and two little children departed from Germany for America in 1857, they left only a few close relatives behind. Bernard's father had died in 1840, his mother in 1844. Bernard had two sisters living in Silberhausen when he left there. The descendants of these sisters are our closest relatives abroad. I can best tell about them by writing of my visit there in 1939, for this was the first contact, except by letter, which any member of the American branch of the family had had with any relative abroad since Bernard left Germany.

On Tuesday, August 8, 1939, eighty-two years after my grandfather, Bernard Fiedler, had left Bremen on a sailing vessel, I arrived at Bremerhaven on the liner Europa. It had taken my grandfather six weeks on a sailing vessel to cross the Atlantic. I recrossed in seven days.

I will admit to some feeling when the tugs pulled the Europa to shore. She docked at Bremerhaven, the new and entirely modern harbor built a few miles north of the ancient city of Bremen. The old harbor

could accommodate sailing vessels, but the new harbor had to be built for modern ocean going vessels.

As I got off the ship and was about to go through customs, the room steward from the Europa came up and handed me a letter from my cousin, Otto Hellbach, saying that his daughter and her fiance would be unable to meet me at Bremerhaven as planned, and that he and his brother would be unable to meet me at Berlin. Instead, I was to meet them a few days hence at Eisenach. Meanwhile, another cousin, Dr. Paul Döring, would take me around Berlin.

I took the boat train from Bremerhaven to Bremen; spent an hour or two seeing the center of Bremen; went on to Hamburg and spent a few hours seeing the downtown part of that city; finally on the same day, took a train for Berlin, arriving there about ten o'clock in the evening. I took a taxi to the Adlon Hotel.

The next morning I telephoned Dr. Döring from the Adlon. Although I understood some German, I could speak very little of it. I had to have the telephone operator make the call.

Dr. Döring arrived in about an hour. He was announced, came up to my room, and we started our conversation in English. We got acquainted looking over the meager family records I had with me. Otto Hellbach had written that Dr. Döring was intensely interested in family history. Moreover, Otto Hellbach had previously mailed to me at Chicago a letter of Dr. Döring which set forth several early dates concerning the Fiedler family. It soon appeared that Dr. Döring

was related to me both on the Fiedler side and also through the Gerlachs, more closely through the latter.

Dr. Döring was about thirty-three, a rising young doctor, an eye specialist, in Berlin. He had been educated at several famous European schools and universities. He spoke some English, but not fluently.

Dr. Döring made a number of corrections in my family records. We got along well and decided to spend the rest of the day motoring in his little car to Potsdam. We picked up his sister, Frau Max Brackel and the latter's daughter on the way. We all had a pleasant afternoon sight-seeing, had afternoon coffee and kuchen, and later had dinner at Siechens on Unter den Linden.

The second day in Berlin I had supper at the Brackels. It was a Friday. We had scrambled eggs and fried potatoes, prepared exactly as my own mother prepared them in Mineral Point, Wisconsin.

After the supper, a distant cousin, Dr. William Fiedler, and his fiancée, Gisela Stoeklein called, and we all had a wine punch which they called "Bowle."

I left Berlin on Saturday, the twelfth of August, 1939. My cousin, Mrs. Brackel, saw me off at the Annhalter station at about 9:00 o'clock in the morning. We had previously agreed to meet in one of the dining rooms in the station. She had asked me whether I would have my breakfast first, second, or third class. I told her second class," and so it was.

I was on a good fast train, went through Leipzig and Weimar to Erfurt, where I had to change trains. Erfurt was a fascinating old city. There I took a local

train which carried me through Gotha and finally to Eisenach.

I had corresponded with my cousin, Otto Hellbach, for several years, but had never been able to form any definite impression of him or his family. He and his brother, Carl, and the latter's eldest son were on the station platform at Eisenach to greet me. I had feelings of anxiety and concern that I might not please them, but in a few moments was sure that all would go well, as it did. The Hellbachs are our closest relatives in Germany. They are our cousins, and the connection is this. Bernard Fiedler left two sisters in Germany. The eldest sister married a man named Hellbach. She died. Her sister then took her place and married the same Hellbach. One of the sisters was the grandmother of Otto and Carl Hellbach. Thus they are my second cousins.

The Hellbachs must have prospered sufficiently in the poor Eichsfeld to give their children a good education. Otto is well educated, an accomplished linguist in English and French, in addition to his native German. He has been a teacher, a professor, all of his life. He has a very amiable disposition. I got to like him especially well, and grew to like him more each day. Otto is a true scholar; he is not a man of business in any way.

Carl Hellbach had his fine looking son carry my heavy trunk-suitcase to their car, and we drove off for an afternoon of sightseeing.

We first drove about five miles to the ancient Wartburg, the most famous castle of ancient and medieval

Germany. The Wartburg is atop the highest mountain immediately overlooking Eisenach. The rolling fields of the Eichsfeld begin a few miles to the north. The Wartburg was started about 1069. Saint Elizabeth lived there in 1227. Martin Luther went to live there around 1521, while he made his translation of the Bible. Wagner wrote his "Tannhäuser" there in 1842. ("Tannhäuser und der Sängerkrieg auf der Wartburg." Tannhäuser and the Singers' Contest at the Wartburg). The great hall of the castle is filled in the usual way with the armour of medieval knights. The singing hall is the original of the many excellent reproductions we see in America when we go to hear Tannhäuser. (Two months later in Chicago I arrived at a performance of Tannhäuser a bit late. I was startled on entering the opera to see a singing hall which was almost an exact replica of the original in the Wartburg of my recent visit.) The rooms of Saint Elizabeth are kept in simplicity. These particular rooms moved me deeply. Some day, my wife and I and our children hope to visit this home of Saint Elizabeth.

Leaving the Wartburg itself, we walked through the valleys and defiles at the foot of the castle hill. More original scenes from Tannhäuser, and the Pilgrim's March and Chorus, and Tannhäuser himself and his Elizabeth.

Then the Hellbachs and I had coffee at Bad Liebenstein, a lovely little place in the Thuringin Forest (where I hope to vacation with my family some day), and then a short drive to Carl Hellbach's home at Bad

Salzungen. We arrived there late in the afternoon, went through Carl Hellbach's large department store, then to his house.

Carl Hellbach was about forty-five, married to Rosa, had several fine children. His is a story of great success. At the same time he is deeply religious. During the first World War, 1914-1918, he was an aviator. After he was discharged from the army, he started with little, opened a small shop. By 1939 he had a chain of three department stores in three good sized cities, and had several hundred employees. When I met him he was the equivalent of an American millionaire.

Carl and Rosa Hellbach lived in a tall four-storied house in the very center of Bad Salzungen. There were no grounds around the house. Cobble stone streets ran down both sides of the corner. The entrance was modest, off on the side. The exterior of the house had recently been put in perfect repair and condition without changing the traditional architecture of that part of Germany. The interior was completely modernized. It had modern electric lights, central heating, several baths, an efficient kitchen. Yet the interior had a very different atmosphere from an American house. Among other things I was interested to note that whereas in our American houses and apartments we leave all doors standing wide open, in the house of Carl Hellbach all doors were always closed.

Carl and Rosa Hellbach kept three cars, a chauffeur, a nurse, and other servants for the running of their

home. Yet their simplicity and their lack of pride was the thing about them that charmed me most.

Each of the two mornings I was there, they, their children, Otto, and I all got up early to attend Mass and receive Communion. We then went back for breakfast. On Sunday morning at breakfast a strange old man was present. When I questioned Otto about him, Otto replied that his brother always invited some poor person from the parish to share their bounty on Sunday.

My second day with the Carl Hellbachs was a Sunday. After a bountiful dinner, we drove north to the Eichsfeld for a visit to the village of Silberhausen. It was about an hour's pleasant drive. Enroute we stopped a few minutes in the village of Helmsdorf, where the Gerlachs lived. We found a house marked Joseph Gerlach, but a young girl there had never heard of the Wisconsin Gerlachs.

I have already told of Silberhausen. The only thing to add here is the fact that I think the village had never before been visited by an American. One of the oldest men in the town, after listening to the conversation between Otto and me in the English language, spoke up and said he had never before heard a word of English spoken.

We walked about the town, into the church where my grandfather was baptized and married, and through the cemetery where my great-grandparents and their ancestors were buried. We were then invited to have coffee and "cream kuchen" with one George Fiedler, a very distant cousin. This cream kuchen was exactly

like that which I had had as a child in Wisconsin. My mother and my sister, Evelyn Ketter, in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, still make it. I want to preserve the recipe permanently as a family tradition and so am including it in this book:

Put on $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of milk to boil and thicken with 1 teaspoon of flour. Let cool. Then stir together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar, 1 egg, and a pinch of salt. Pour into part 1 and add $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cream. Pour into the "kuchen shell," sprinkle with cinnamon and bake.

The "kuchen shell" is made of dough prepared as follows. At noon crush finely 1 medium sized boiled potato with a fork. Cover with 1 small cup of flour, pour over scalding water — enough to take up flour well. Let cool. Then pour into it one compressed yeast cake, which has been dissolved in a little lukewarm water. Let stand till late evening. Then add $\frac{3}{4}$ sieve of flour, adding enough lukewarm water to make a firm sponge. Beat well. Let stand over night. The next morning take 1 pint of milk and scald it, adding about $\frac{1}{8}$ pound of butter. When this becomes lukewarm, mix into it 1 cup sugar and a good handful of salt. Mix together this milk mixture and the above sponge. Then mix it all into flour, kneading it into a dough not too stiff. Let rise till light.

The kuchen dough is now ready to be put into either sweet rolls, sugar kuchen, cinnamon rolls, or schnecken, or to be used as rolled out shells for cream kuchen. Roll out thin to line a pan for cream kuchen. Let rise just a little. Then fill with filling, sprinkle with cinnamon and bake. Various fruits are delicious added — as boiled sweetened apricots, or fresh berries. Exceptionally good with red currants.

Thus they there in the Eichsfeld, and we in Wisconsin made an identical pastry, though there has been no contact for almost a century.

We left Silberhausen toward evening, were soon in Bad Salzungen, had a delicious Sunday evening supper

which included some Eichsfeld sausage bought in Silberhausen, had a good long talk, and went to bed.

The next morning after Mass and Communion and breakfast, the Carl Hellbach family saw Otto and me off for Werl, in Westphalen, where Otto lived.

We arrived at Werl in the afternoon and were met by Otto's wife, Charlotte. I liked her instantly. Three of their four children were away.

Werl has a population of about 10,000. Otto Hellbach was director of the public school there. Though a public school, the crucifix was hung over the main entrance of the school building, and several of the teachers in the school were Catholic nuns. Otto and his family had their large apartment on the second floor of one wing of the main school building. The rooms had electric lights and modern plumbing, but were heated with stoves. I liked the atmosphere of the apartment. It had dignity and charm — the home of a scholar.

After a nice luncheon which Charlotte prepared, we walked about the town, saw the lovely old cemetery, and had afternoon coffee.

Toward evening I rented a car, and had Otto and his son drive me to the nearby medieval city of Soest. We spent about an hour seeing the sights, especially the ancient Roman ruins. I then caught an express train for Cologne, just as night was closing. I said good-bye to Otto Hellbach with regret. I thought him one of the finest men I had ever met.

I arrived in Cologne about ten o'clock that night. The next day, I left Germany for France and England.

The Second World War broke out two weeks after I left Germany. The mails continued to remain open for some time. Late in 1939, I received a letter from Otto Hellbach which pleased me greatly. I think it will be of interest to repeat it here. I shall quote it exactly and thereby show the style of one of our relatives who learned English in school, but who had little opportunity to practice it:

Werl, the 23d, October 1939

Dear Cousin,

You may imagine that we longed for your news and worried about you too. Your letter at last satisfied us, it needed 30 days till it reached us. Now we are very glad to hear you arrived well and enjoy again your family. Your wife is lovely and the little one very dear, certainly the apple of your eye. Many thanks for the photos.

Till to the 11. 9. (September 11), I was in Werl, then for some weeks far from it and now I am again quite near my homestead. I am very well, have a lot of time and am continuing my working English. Presently I am nearly through *The Forsyte Saga* by Galsworthy, a very fine book. Only our sons-in-law are soldiers with us, and Nicole is allowed to perform his study. So is Elmer, and both will finish at Easter quite a year spared. Thus Inge and Nicole will marry soon afterwards. Ludger is going to become a pilot, he is working for his enlistment. Inge and Gisela now are together at Kiel in profession as well as in dwelling. Gisela's lover is very well too, only cousin Charlotte feels lonely, although I come to see her every second or third day. My brother is not yet soldier, he paid us a visit last Thursday with his wife and eldest son Charles George. I'll send them your letter at once.

As the impressions of your voyage passed so swiftly I shall try to light them up from my memory and thus recall even the slightest experiences. You know we could not conceive that you were in such a hurry and it was impossible for you to digest all you saw.

I begin with our first meeting at the station of Eisenach. I looked for you long time and was much astonished to see you so young and amiable. We met my brother and his eldest

in his fine car which us took to the Wartburg "this most splendid and oldest of all castles (Burgen) in whole Germany. We had firstly a fine view upon the tower and its surroundings, saw the "Thuringer Wald" and northern the dear Eichsfeld. The "poor Eichsfelder" often were mentioned. In the "Burg" we were badly lead, you may perhaps represent you the large hall with the pictures of the "Competition of the Singers," the Chapell, the room of St. Elizabeth, the collection of armes and armours and finally Luther's room where he was throwing the inkpot against the devil. The old town of Eisenach has been spoiled by large many-factories. We descended into the "Dragon's Schlucht," entered the "Thuringer Wald" in large curves and had a fine view at the "High Sun." We passed through long and clear villages and came to "Bad Liebenstein" which is laying inmidst the woods, visited the small catholic chapel, saw the "Kurhall" and arrived about 7 o'clock at Salzungen. You remember there the prosperity of the skilful businessman Charles, his cosy house, your words of receiving Aunt Rosa. "Cousin Rosa you are blessed with your husband, your children and your business." We spent the evening in the family, you showed us your chronic of Fiedler's family. Then we had a walk round the lake and to the "Kurhause," the architecture of which you much admired, drank a good bock and slept both in a room. You conquered the hearts of all and we were very happy and it was a perfect understanding. You longed feverishly for the village of Silberhausen.

Sunday forenoon. We were in the fine church built by the gentleness of a blind Englishman. We visited the salt-spring, tried the water with 22% of salt, entered the salinen where the salt was dispersed in steam. You were very frightened entering the room with the sharp odeurs.

Then we started for Mülhausen, took a look in the business rooms there and came always nearer to Helmsdorf. The family of your mother was not at home, the daughter did not know anything about the Gerlachs in Amerique. (I wrote a letter from Werl and asked some questions but did not get an answer). We alighted before Silberhausen and began our pilgrimage through the poor, neglected village. There were Fiedlers in all lanes, on many crosses in the churchyard. Silberhausen is the type of an Eichsfelder overpopulated village without any factories. The lack of order and of a home-trained love of beauty is characteristic to the "Aleman-nen tribe," a part of which the Eichsfelders are. I know the

country Alsace-Lorraine, all is the same there. The Eichsfelder abroad thru their intelligence and their capacity to adapt them easily, they get ————— if they were well off. For instance my parents were so simple in furniture and manner of living, but we are no more, nor you either.

I must thank you for having discovered the cross of our grandparents in Silberhausen. In order to continue we set off and passed some larger and more beautiful villages and had philosophical speeches, which proved better still the relationship of our souls. As well as we had tasted the Silberhausen cake we ate the famous "Eichsfelder feldgilker" — look into the fields ————— at supper at Salzungen. We spent the evening in a hotel together with a Canadian and other people.

Are you able to represent our trip in the railway from Salzungen to Werl? I remember each word we spoke, your report from your difficulties in life and study after your dear father's death. I told of my children, and we understood us again and again. At Werl my wife came to meet us before the large building of the Ursulines. We had breakfast together. You would help Charlotte. Then we took a walk to our fine cemetery to my parents' grave. We met a Franciscain, saw our church and the miraculous picture in the cloister church. You made the acquaintance with an ill maiden in our Kurgarden and you had the kindness to promise her to send medicine which arrived soon after for the whole money. You had only one fault, to leave us too quick. At half pas six o'clock we started for Soest, this wonderfull medieval town with the biggest tower of the oldest Cathedral and his thick walls round the town.

And finally we saw you off, it as all so exciting. You sensitive gentleness and lovelyhood charmed us very much, you were so very attractive and sympathetic. Your first visit flashed before the eyes of our mind, and yet we never would miss it and we never shall forget you.

The war will be over once and we hope to see you and your dear wife and child.

As you wished I wrote as it flew out of the pen, you must try to understand it. I should be very obliged to you for having a report from your impressions at Paris and London and especially from your voyage on the Bremen.

With dearest love

your Cousin

Otto Hellbach

VII

Review of the Nine Generations of Fiedlers
Since 1648

HE FIEDLER family emerged in medieval Germany after the Thirty Years War. The family then began its recorded history. In quick review, I shall set forth each succeeding generation in its place in contemporary history. For convenience, I shall give the title of first generation to the family of which we have the earliest written record.

First Generation: John Fiedler, born in 1650 (or within one or two years of that date). Married at Silberhausen on August 12, 1676. Died September 6, 1739, age about 90.

While John was growing up, the duchy of Brandenburg was being enlarged into the state of Prussia, including East Prussia.

In America, the thirteen original colonies of England were being formed. It would seem certain that John never heard of America.

John was about thirty-five when the great composer, Johann Sebastian Bach was born in 1685. John lived during the years when Bach wrote his greatest chorals.

Second Generation: The aforesaid John had five sons. Henry, Hans Benedict, Christian, John Joseph, and Hans Adam, all born from 1678 to 1689.

In 1690 Joseph I was elected King by the Diet of Augsburg.

In 1701 Prussia was first erected into a kingdom under Frederick I.

In 1713 the Pragmatic Sanction was formally established in the Holy Roman Empire, vesting the succession in the daughters of Charles.

In America the colonies were prospering and expanding.

Third Generation: One of the five brothers, I don't know which one, was the father of John Henry, born on January 28, 1716, married at Silberhausen on February 19, 1753, died May 12, 1772, age 54.

John Henry was sixteen when George Washington was born on February 22, 1732. John Henry died four years before the American Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776.

John Henry was fifty-two when the greatest of all composers, Beethoven, was born at Bonn in 1770.

The Seven Years War between Prussia and Austria began in 1756, three years after John Henry was married.

Fourth Generation: The last mentioned John Henry was the father of John Casper, born February 10, 1757, married in the Catholic Church of SS. Cosmas and Damian on January 24, 1785, died in the next century on June 26, 1824, age 67.

John Caspar was the first of the Fiedlers to be married in the presently standing church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, which was built in 1758.

John Caspar, 1757–1824, lived through the Napoleonic Wars, the resulting breakup of the Holy Roman Empire, the transfer of the Eichsfeld and Silberhausen to the King of Prussia.

He also lived through the American Revolution, and the founding of the United States of America.

1793 the Second Partition of Poland was made by Russia and Prussia.

Truly, this ancestor lived through wars and revolutions.

Fifth Generation: John Caspar was the father of John Henry, born on July 19, 1800, married at SS. Cosmas and Damian, died September 10, 1840, age 40.

The end of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation occurred in 1804.

The Congress of Vienna in 1815 effected the political reconstruction of Europe.

The diet of the German Confederation assembled at Frankfort in 1816.

In Leipzig, Richard Wagner was born in 1813.

In America, the state of Illinois was admitted to the Union in 1818.

Sixth Generation: (First Generation in America) And now, after five generations, after 200 years in the village of Silberhausen, we come to Bernard Fiedler. He was born on December 21, 1828, married at SS. Cosmas and Damian on February 7, 1853, emigrated to America in 1857, died in 1887, age 59.

In 1848 revolutions occurred in Berlin on March 18th and 19th.

Prussia at war with Denmark.

Seventh Generation: (Second Generation in America). Bernard had one daughter, Genevieve, and six sons, Henry, John, Bernard, Herman, Ernest, and Joseph. Of these, Herman and Joseph are living. My own father, Bernard, was born on the Fiedler farm in La Fayette County, Wisconsin, on November 20, 1862. Married at the pioneer mission church of St. Peter, on January 20, 1891, to Dorothy Gerlach, died at Mineral Point, Wisconsin on November 12, 1911, age 49.

Eighth Generation: (Third Generation in America)
This is my own generation.

The First World War began in August, 1914, and ended four years later on November 11, 1918.

The Second World War began on September 3, 1939, ended six years later in 1945.

Ninth Generation: (Fourth Generation in America)
This is the generation of my children; Mary, born December 12, 1935; and John, born November 14, 1941.

VII

Conclusion



LOOKING BACKWARD once more, we now see the entire picture more clearly. The family has been in America for the short period of eighty-nine years. Before that the family lived for over 209 years in the rural medieval village of Silberhausen. And before that the family was, for centuries, living in Silberhausen, or in the surrounding area called the Eichsfeld.

There is one thought about our family history which seems contradictory, yet which actually is very true. Throughout my childhood and youth, I had always assumed that we had been in this country so long that there remained no connection whatever with the old country. I believe that all of my cousins have always thought the same. Yet the facts are quite startling. For instance, I was born only forty-seven years after Bernard and Katharine came to America, and while I was a child, there were millions of people living in Germany who were there when my grandparents departed. Another fact. When I visited Germany in 1939, only eighty-two years after my grandparents had departed, there were tens of thousands of people still living who were there when my grandparents departed. As a matter of fact, there were a few people over eighty-two still living in Silberhausen who had

lived in that village continuously since Bernard and Katharine had gone to America. I found several old men and women who as children had heard of the departure of my grandparents. Most surprising of all, there are even today, in 1946, many people living in Germany who were little children when my grandparents left there eighty-nine years ago. I say this because occasionally I read in the newspapers that some well-known person in Germany has just died at the age of ninety or more. Similarly there are many people in this country over ninety who were alive when Bernard Fiedler arrived here. All of these facts were surprising to me as I came to realize them fully. For though I had started my thoughts on the assumption that time had erased all connection with our kin abroad, I had finally come to realize that the time which had elapsed was short indeed.

This completes my story. We now have 300 years of family history — a little over 200 years in the land of our ancestors, a little less than 100 years in our beloved America.

THE END

APPENDIX A

Extract from Letter of Dr. Paul Döring
Potsdamerstr. 159
Berlin

Telephone: 27, 01, 23

“... concerning the mentioned date in the older church book of Helmsdorf, the designation of the place is not recognizable. Also the name “Neyd” (?) is so indecipherable that I can write it only in quotation marks with a question mark.

The previously mentioned couple Fiedler, who were ancestors of ours, had five sons: Heinrich Adam (born Nov. 8, 1678), Hans Benedikt (born Dec. 2, 1681), and Hans Adam (born Dec. 25, 1689) are the ancestral fathers of the three great branches in Silberhausen. From the last my mother descended. A fourth son, Christian (Jan. 16, 1684) died unmarried in Silberhausen on Dec. 6, 1763. The fifth son, Johann Joseph Fiedler (born Mar. 13, 1687) is mentioned in the publication “Our Eichsfeld” (published by Alvis-Duderstadt) in the March number of the year 1929 in the article “In Connection with the History of the Eichsfeld School System as of July 29, 1744” as a teacher at Diedorf, 57 Years old, born in Silberhausen. I know nothing concerning his further life. I have not made any inquiries as yet. Perhaps something is men-

tioned concerning him in the "Chronicle of Diedorf" which was published a few years ago, I believe, by a certain "Ehler," which I have not however had in my hands as yet. — At any rate the family Fiedler is greatly branched out through the *three aforementioned* sons in Silberhausen. Then in the 19th Century, according to my notes, a strong migration started. So far as I know now, alone eight male Fiedlers have emigrated to America. And who knows where the others are. It is still time to complete much through inquiries with relatives in Silberhausen! And that shall be my next problem, when I come to Eichsfeld. Perhaps there will be something yet in this year.

The "Little Fiedler" mentioned by you is not a descendant of "Paulus" (born Jan. 2, 1834); by the way, every trace concerning your great uncle Paulus is lacking. The "Little Fiedler" is, according to my mother, "Heinrich Fiedler" born in Silberhausen Dec. 20, 1866, son of Joseph (1828–1887) a brother of Wilhelm F. (born Dec. 18, 1864), still living in Schwedt (Oder). The widow of Heinrich is supposed to live in Dingelstaedt with several children.

The father of "Little F." — Joseph (1828–87) is a nephew of your great-grandmother, Elenora Fiedler (daughter of (or married to) Bonifas Hellbach).

The Clerical School Councilor in Duerfeld — Joseph F., died in Silberhausen, May 22, 1875, and his brother Lorenz F., born Dec. 29, 1879, surgeon and gynecologist — at present Head Doctor of the "Herz Jesu Hospital" in Dernbach, Westerwald, are already known to me. I saw the latter myself already several years

ago. He has three sons and one daughter; one son is studying medicine, another, law. I am related to the same through several different lines. They are direct descendants in the male descent of Heinrich Adam Fiedler (Sept. 9, 1709), your great-great-great-grandfather. For today to you and your esteemed family very hearty Eichsfeld greetings.

DÖRING

Happy Easter.

1937.

APPENDIX B

Diary of Trip to Europe in 1939

July 31 — Monday. Said goodbye to Mary Barbara at 1105 Maplewood Drive, Lake Forest, shortly after lunch. Agnes took me to the station at Lake Forest. Mrs. Amberg and Bud met me at Northwestern Station and took me to Union Station, where I took a Pennsylvania train for New York at 2:30 o'clock.

August 1 — Tuesday. Arrived Pennsylvania Station at 8:00 o'clock A.M. Took a taxi to North German Lloyd Pier and left my suitcase at the pier. Took a tour through the Europa. Went back to uptown district of New York and went to a movie. Returned to pier and boarded Europa at 11:00 o'clock P.M.

August 2 — Wednesday. 12:30 A.M. Sailed. To bed at 1:45 A.M. Up at 7:00 o'clock A.M. Cashed an American Express Company travelmark check for 50 marks. Seated at table with Robin Daly of London, Henry Mohr of New York and Dr. Professor Georg Kiene of Berlin. Weather clear and warm.

August 3 — Thursday. Wrote several letters. Heard gossip that man had jumped overboard and that the Europa had cruised in circles for two hours but failed to find the man. Got a deck chair. Went to the movies. Weather clear and very cool.

August 4 — Friday. Took a nap in my deck chair during the morning. Took a long nap in my state-

room after lunch. Went to the movies. Argued politics with Robin Daly and Dr. Kiene. To bed at 12:00 o'clock.

August 5 — Saturday. Up at 7:20. Bought a railroad ticket to go from Bremerhaven to Berlin. Wrote Agnes — her birthday. Weather clear, quite cold.

August 6 — Sunday. Breakfast at 8:00 o'clock. We have been losing one hour every day, consequently I have been losing that much sleep. Rather tired. To church at 10:00 o'clock in the small social hall. Took a long nap after Sunday noon dinner. Argued politics for several hours on deck with Robin Daly and Dr. Kiene.

August 7 — Monday. Awakened at Cherbourg at 7:00 o'clock. Weather very damp, foggy. Left Cherbourg during breakfast. Arrived off Portsmouth at 12:00 o'clock noon. Tow tenders took off several passengers for Southampton. Trip through the English Channel very interesting. At one point saw both the English and the French coasts at the same time. Left the English Channel and entered the North Sea.

August 8 — Tuesday. Up at 5:30 o'clock A.M. Still no sign of Bremerhaven, but passed a great many small vessels. Breakfast at 7:00 o'clock. Arrived at Bremerhaven and left it immediately in order to catch express train for Berlin. Went through Customs. Was asked only about coffee and cigarettes. Arriving at Bremen I decided to get off the special train and spend an hour or two in Bremen. Walked through the old part of the city of Bremen. Took train to Hamburg shortly before noon and arrived at Hamburg about

1:30. Took a taxi to Burgerhause on Grimm Street. After lunch walked through the old part of the city of Hamburg. Took express train to Berlin. Arrived at Berlin at Lehrter Station at 8:00 o'clock in the evening. Took a taxi to the Adlon Hotel, Unter den Linden. Got a room with a balcony overlooking the embassies and the Brandenburg Gate.

August 9 — Wednesday. Up at 10:00 o'clock in the morning. Breakfast in Adlon Grill. Telephoned to my distant cousin, Dr. Paul Döring, Potsdammer Strasse 159, telephone 27-01-23. Doctor Döring, an eye specialist, was born on August 26, 1906, is related to me distantly on my father's side, more closely on my mother's side. Went with Dr. Döring and his sister and the latter's daughter by motor to Potsdam. Saw Sans Souci. Went through the New Palace. Had afternoon coffee at a fine old schloss. Had dinner at Siechens, Unter den Linden.

August 10 — Thursday. Up at 8:00 o'clock. Had breakfast at a sidewalk cafe, Unter den Linden. Went to the Berlin Museum and saw the Pergammon Altar. In the afternoon took a sight-seeing bus all over Berlin. Had dinner that evening with Dr. Georg Kiene and his family. His address: Berlin — Niederschonhausen, Uhlan Strasse 37; telephone, 48-33-25. Took a streetcar from Dr. Kiene's house to the subway and then took the subway to within a block of the Adlon Hotel. Found a cablegram from Agnes.

August 11 — Friday. Dinner with my distant cousin at 7:00 o'clock. Frau Max Brackel, a sister of Doctor Döring. Her address is Berlin, Steglitz, Ger-

hard Weber Strasse 7. Frau Brackel has three children, a daughter about eighteen and two sons. Paul Döring came later for dinner. About 10:00 o'clock Dr. William Fiedler and his fiancée came to see us. Dr. William Fiedler's address is Berlin, Schoenberg, Reppich Strasse 10-C. He is engaged to Gisela Stoeklein. After leaving Frau Brackel, we all had beer at an old bierstube on Unter den Linden.

August 12 — Saturday. Left Berlin at 9:20 in the morning at the Annhalter Station. Went through Leipzig, Weimar, Erfurt (changed trains at Erfurt), and Gotha and arrived at Eisenach. My cousin, Otto Hellbach, and his brother, Karl Hellbach, met me at Eisenach. We spent the afternoon going through the Wartburg. We then drove to Karl Hellbach's house at Bad Salzungen. Had a delicious dinner there. Spent the evening talking over our family and contrasting conditions in Germany with those in America.

August 13 — Sunday. Up early. To church. Drove through Eisenach to the Eichsfeld. Went through the village of Zella where the Gerlachs lived for several centuries. Drove about three miles to Helmsdorf, where the Gerlachs subsequently settled. Stopped at a house marked over the door "Joseph Gerlach," but the woman there knew nothing of the Gerlachs in America. Drove about three miles further to Silberhausen. Met George Fiedler, aged about seventy-five, and Adam Fiedler, aged about seventy-seven. Population of Silberhausen was about 400 in 1857. Now it is about 1,000. The railroad was built to Silberhausen

in 1871 after the Franco-Prussian War and with the money which was part of the war indemnity. Visited the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, which was built in 1758, Renaissance style. Had coffee and kuchen at the Fiedlers'. Drove back to Bad Salzungen.

August 14 — Monday. Took train, third class, for Werl. Great many soldiers on all trains. Changed trains at Eisenach, again at Kassel, and again at Soest. Arrived at Werl about 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon. Had dinner with the Hellbachs. Took a taxi to ancient city of Söest, having a population of about 25,000. There I caught the Berlin express train for Cologne and arrived at 9:20. Got a room at the Eternal Lamp Hotel, opposite Cologne Cathedral.

August 15 — Tuesday. Feast of the Assumption. Up very early. Took taxi about the city. Went to Cologne Cathedral to Mass and Communion. Left Cologne at 8:48 on international train for Paris. Went through German customs at Aix-la-Chapelle. Went through French customs after passing through Belgium. Arrived at Paris at 4:45 P.M. Took a taxi to Hotel Francia, 100 Rue LaFayette. Found a letter from Agnes awaiting me. Telephoned the Misses Moran. They invited me to lunch at their chateau the following day.

August 16 — Wednesday. Up at 7:30. Had excellent Continental breakfast. Took a taxi to the chateau of the Misses Moran. They live in an old place at Rochefort en Yvelines, not far from Versailles. Gave the Misses Moran best regards from Mother Amberg.

August 17 — Thursday. Up at 8:30. Took rubber-neck bus through Paris. In the afternoon went through Notre Dame Cathedral.

August 18 — Friday. Took sight-seeing bus to Versailles. On returning visited the Sacre Coeur atop the Montmatre hill.

August 19 — Saturday. Left Paris from the Gare du Nord at 4:40 o'clock in the afternoon for London. Arrived at Boulogne at sundown. Crossed Channel. Arrived at Folkestone when it was dark. Had dinner on the express train to London. Arrived at London at Victoria Station, took a taxi to the Victoria Hotel.

August 20 — Sunday. Big English breakfast. Went to church at Westminster Cathedral at 12:00 o'clock noon. Afterwards drove all around London with Robin Daly and had supper with his cousins. They gave me a gas mask, saying that war was imminent.

August 21 — Monday. Did a little shopping. Went through Westminster Abbey and the Tower. Had dinner with Robin Daly. His address: 47 Connaught Gardens, London, N. 10. Cablegram from Agnes.

August 22 — Tuesday. Went through Lincolns Inn. Newspapers announced non-aggression treaty between Germany and Russia. Spent most of my time opposite 10 Downing Street listening to the crowds. Informed by the North German Lloyd that it was doubtful whether the Bremen would sail. Finally informed that the Bremen had left Bremerhaven.

August 23 — Wednesday. Got up early after a sleepless night on account of the war crisis. Took taxi to Waterloo Station. Got on boat train at 10:22 and

arrived at the Southampton Docks about noon. Tender took off about 1:00 o'clock in the afternoon and arrived at the Bremen about one hour later. Had lunch on the Bremen. Given a beautiful first-class cabin on my third-class ticket. Took on some passengers at Cherbourg at about sundown. War news very tense, nevertheless French band still played Germain airs.

August 24 — Thursday. Gained two hours' sleep — had a good rest. According to radio bulletins, war situation very critical. Much gossip on board the ship that she would return to Germany or that she would be sunk.

August 25 — Friday. Will soon be half-way across. Talked on deck with Mrs. Carey of the Quaker Relief Commission, Mrs. Whitney, Assistant Dean of Women at Beloit College, and Mrs. Holbrook. Much gossip about the possibility that the ship would turn back.

August 26 — Saturday. Although it rained all night it was clear Saturday. Much wild gossip that the Bremen was being followed by warships and would be sunk. Toward evening the ship neared the Newfoundland Banks and there was some fog.

August 27 — Sunday. Up early and to church. Ship now one day from New York.

August 28 — Monday. Arrived at New York at about six o'clock in the evening. Went through Customs quickly. Saw Edward Farley for a few minutes. Telephoned Agnes at Lake Forest. Caught Pennsylvania train at 6:50 in the evening.

August 29 — Tuesday. HOME!

September 3 — Sunday. England declared war on Germany. Second World War begun.

APPENDIX C

Chronology of Nine Generations of the
Fiedler Family

- (1) Circa 1650 — John Fiedler, born. Married on August 12, 1676 to Katharine "Neyd."
- (2) November 8, 1678 — Henry Adam Fiedler, born. Married Martha —. Died September 6, 1739.
December 2, 1681 — Hans Benedict Fiedler, born.
January 16, 1684 — Christian Fiedler, born; died unmarried at Silberhausen Dec. 6, 1763.
March 13, 1687 — John Joseph Fiedler, born.
December 25, 1689 — Hans Adam Fiedler, born.
Four brothers.
- (3) January 28, 1716 — John Henricus Fiedler, born. Died May 12, 1772. Married Mary Elizabeth Wolff (1) M. Feb. 19, 1753.

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- (1) Mary Elizabeth Wolff Fiedler was born 1721; died May 11, 1783.
 - (2) Clara Elizabeth Meinhardt was born and baptized on August 6, 1804. She died on May 13, 1844. Her parents were Nicholas Meinhardt and Anna Mary Meinhardt.
 - (3) Anna Katharine Schneider was born January 28, 1831; baptized on January 29, 1831; died July 2, 1923; buried at Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Her parents were Henry Schneider and Anna Margaret Döring. Henry Schneider was born and baptized June 7, 1792; died August 8, 1870; buried in cemetery of St. Peter's

- (4) Feb. 10, 1757 — John Caspar Fiedler, born. Died June 26, 1824. Married on January 24, 1785 to Catherine Monday.
- (5) July 19, 1800 — John Henry Fiedler, born and baptized. Married on November 14, 1825, to Clara Elizabeth Meinhardt (2). Died September 10, 1840.
- (6) December 21, 1828 — Bernard Fiedler, born. Married on February 7, 1853, to Anna Katharine Schneider (3). Died in America on August 8, 1887; buried at Mineral Point, Wisconsin.
1857 — Fiedlers came to America.
- (7) November 20, 1862 — Bernard Fiedler II, born. Married on January 20, 1891, to Dorothy Gerlach (4). Died November 12, 1911.
- (8) September 28, 1904 — George Fiedler, born. Married on November 28, 1931, to Agnes Zoe Amberg (5).
- (9) December 12, 1935 — Mary Barbara Fiedler, born.
November 14, 1941 — John Amberg Fiedler,

Church near Mineral Point, Wisconsin. Anna Margaret Döring was born and baptized on February 23, 1791; died June 30, 1856. Henry Schneider and Anna Margaret Döring were married on January 13, 1818.

(4) See Gerlach Family Record.

(5) See Amberg Family Record.

